Government owned satellite system and the transponder on INSAT is being used by both Government and Private users.

Licences are being given by DOT to the Indian registered companies for providing "64 Kbps Domestic Data Network Closed Users Group Service by using VSATs (Very Small Aperture Terminals)" over the INSAT satellite system. So far thirteen (13) licenses have already been awarded to various companies from 3.8.94 onwards. Nine (9) companies have started the service.

Poverty Alleviation Programme in Rajasthan

341. COL. SONA RAM CHOUDHARY : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that about 39.28% rural people of Western Rajasthan are living below poverty line;

(b) if so, whether the Government propose to formulate some crash programme to improve their living conditions;

(c) whether the Government are contemplating to declare 'Helments' & Dhanis of desert areas a Revenue villages to enable them to reap the benefits of development programmes which are presently restricted to Revenue villages only; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU) : (a) As per estimates of poverty for 1993-94 released by planning Commission, the percentage of rural poor living below poverty in Rajasthan is 26.46.

(b) No proposal for formulating crash programme is under consideration with the Govt.

(c) and (d) The subject matter does not come within the purview of the Central Government.

Fire in Chennai Telephone Exchange

342. SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether there was a major fire accident in Chennai Telephone Exchange;

(b) if so, the number of lines affected and the amount of loss suffered thereto;

(c) whether any enquiry in the matter has been made;

(d) if so, the details and causes of the accident; and

(e) the steps taken by the Government to avoid such accidents in future ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes, Sir. On 23-6-97 a major fire took place in Anna Road Telephone Exchange Complex in Chennai.

(b) About 32,357 telephone lines were affected due to this fire. Total loss suffered on account of this fire is estimated to the tune of Rs. 6.5 crores (approx).

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Technical and Development Circle Jabalpur is investigating the cause of fire and the enquiry is in final stage.

(e) Standing instructions on the subject have been re-itereated to all the field units for strict compliance to avoid recurrance of such incidents in future.

Delhi Telephone Directory

343. SHRI THOMAS HANSDA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Delhi Telephone Directory was last issued at the end of 1994;

(b) if so, how many new telephone connections have been provided to the subscribers in Delhi after the issue of Directory;

(c) whether any arrangements have been made to provide service to the subscribers in the absence of a Telephone Directory;

(d) the time by when the new telephone Directory is proposed to be issued; and

(e) the reasons for the delay ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes, Sir.